



Restoring Southern Iraq's Electric Power

Challenge

A fire started at Southern Iraq's electric power company which resulted from power cables soaked in fuel oil since the 1991 Gulf War. The cables caught fire from a spark and spread underground through the ground wire and shorted out key transformers. Fire spread in other parts of the mammoth 30-year old power plant – biggest in southern Iraq at 400 megawatts. According to Yarob Jassim, director general of the plant, "we are urgently in need of this plant. My minister is calling me hourly to ask when we will have power."



Photo: USAID/Ben Barber

Initiative

USAID provided the plant with money to buy tools, equipment, cables, and other help in getting the plant up and running. Much of its equipment had been looted after Saddam Hussein was ousted. Power has been vital to calm tensions since Basrah has suffered from temperatures up to 125 degrees all summer and the electricity shortages meant no fans, no refrigeration and no lights.

Results

USAID in cooperation with the Iraqi Electricity Commission have rushed to help Jassim fire up his power plant – producing power will quickly help Iraqis recover from the decades of neglect and abuse under Saddam Hussein.

Long-term help to the region's deteriorating and badly-neglected power sector is being provided by USAID through a contract with the Bechtel company, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Combined Joint Task Force-7 and the Iraqi Electricity Commission – all working in conjunction with the Coalition Provisional Authority.

